

## SYSTEM AND METHOD FOR ONLINE COMMUNITY MANAGEMENT

### CROSS REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

[0001] This application is a continuation of and claims priority to application Ser. No. 13/894,112 filed May 14, 2013, and which application is hereby incorporated by reference in its entirety and for all purposes. This application is also related to commonly assigned, co-pending application Ser. No. 13/894,099, entitled "System and Method for Network Gaming Architecture," Ser. No. 13/894,109, entitled, "System and Method for Multiplayer Network Gaming," and Ser. No. 13/894,104, entitled, "System and Method for Time Flow Adjustment in Multiplayer Games," which are incorporated herein by reference.

### FIELD

[0002] The present application relates to management of a community of players in an online gaming environment. More specifically, the present disclosure describes computerized systems, methods, and apparatuses for improved player management through an automated player classification and punishment system. While the invention is disclosed with respect to an online multiplayer game experience, it could also be applied to other communities such as file/content sharing, online social networking environment, or any system requiring the management of large user populations over the internet.

### BACKGROUND

[0003] Many videogames offer an online multiplayer mode in addition to a storyline mode. The commercial success of many videogames can be attributable, to some degree, on the multiplayer offering of the videogame. Online multiplayer games have become so popular that some games have communities as large as several million players. With any large community, especially anonymous online communities, there exists a greater propensity for some players to engage in anti-social behavior, unsportsmanlike conduct, or cheating. These sorts of players can detract from the experience of normal players and in the aggregate can greatly diminish enjoyment of a game. In order to address these negative players and provide an enjoyable multiplayer experience for all players, developers often maintain an administrative staff to manage the online community through the investigation of complaints, appeals, and tracking of cheaters or other suspect players. Community management is an extremely complicated and labor intensive task. Providing this type of manual community management presents an extremely large overhead cost to developers that must be maintained well after the initial purchase of the game.

[0004] In addition to cost, manual community management can be ineffective with the large volume of games occurring around the clock, addressing complaints and appeals can be not only extremely costly, but also time intensive such that delays can also detract from the multiplayer experience with players having to wait while staff investigate appeals of false accusations. However, cost and speed are not the only factors to be considered, fairness is also a driving force in any community management system and thus the determinations and punishments should be clear to all users and fairly enforced. Finally, as in any complex

system such as a multiplayer game, there is great vulnerability for exploitation and abuses may not all be identified at the onset; the system should therefore be flexible in its ability to identify and deal with new types of cheating. Thus, an effective community management system must balance all four considerations of cost, time efficiency, fairness, and flexibility.

### BRIEF SUMMARY

[0005] Innovative systems and methods for online community management are disclosed for providing a community management system that is cost effective, quick, fair, and flexible. The disclosed systems and methods are applicable for use with any online community, and while it is disclosed with respect to an online multiplayer game experience, they could be applied to other communities such as file/content sharing, online social networking environment, or any system requiring the management of large user populations over the internet.

[0006] The disclosed systems and methods improve on existing community management systems by providing an automated system in conjunction with a manual system that has a tiered classification system and a scaled punishment system.

[0007] In order to significantly lower the cost and increase the speed of community management, an automated component of the system is implemented. For certain types of actions where undesired conduct is clearly and easily detected the automated component of the system can be used to effectively reduce costs by handling all community management activities for these types of activities. The automated component of the system can also aid admin staff by identifying players that engage in questionable conduct for further investigation. Some examples of activities that could easily and automatically be detected by the system include: players leaving while a game is in progress, data and stat manipulation, and the modification of game files.

[0008] Additionally, the system offers a peer reporting system that allows users to report other players for undesired conduct thus shifting some of the burdens of policing the less egregious conduct onto the community. To prevent peer report abuse, user's reports are "weighted" with their frequency. A user who submits multiple reports over a short period of time has the effect of each of their reports proportionately reduced. Users may also report positive conduct. Although one negative report may not adversely change the status of a player, in the aggregate they can cause a player to be adversely effected by altering the player's ability to participate in the game.

[0009] An optional manual component working closely with the automated component can maintain flexibility and fairness in the system. Undesired conduct can come in many forms and that are not always easily detected or classified by automated processes. Thus, it may be advisable to maintain a manual component of the community management system comprising admin staff to address and make determinations on conduct that is not easily and automatically detectable. The automated component can provide additional tools and notifications to reduce the burden on the admin staff.

[0010] Generally the behaviors of interest are referred to as undesired behavior, but more specifically, these behaviors include but are not limited to: bad sportsmanship, bullying, offensive conduct, poor connection, stats manipulation, bug exploitation, repeat offenders, hacking, and piracy. To prop-